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PHILOSOPHY OF THE UNCONSCIOUS.

By **HARST KAPP.**

In the present work,* which very modestly calls itself "An Attempt at a Theory of the Universe" [*Weltanschauung*], a decided step has been taken towards an entirely new "*Weltanschauung*" by the introduction of the Unconscious as a principle into philosophy. This "Unconscious" itself, however, is not anything new; rather is it the oldest, that which is more or less known and current throughout the world; it is the primeval ground of all the change in the universe, the only possible and authentic beginning to a systematic philosophy. From the earliest times, in the scattered appearances of it, a subject of wonder, of observation, and, to some extent, of philosophical investigation, it had hitherto—notwithstanding that our knowledge of it was continually becoming more adequate—withdrawn itself under numerous veils from thoughtful consideration, as a connected whole. The development of organic structures, the instinct of animals, the law that prevails in the formation of political communities, the spontaneous healing of social and physical crimes, the rise of languages, the native talent for art and science, the fixed rule governing the recurrence of crimes, births, deaths and suicides in human society; these, and many other phenomena, have in all times occupied the attention of natural investigators, historians, philologists, educators, physiologists, statisticians, and philosophers. These, however, have placed the Unconscious which reveals itself in such phenomena, in opposition to a conscious as a Natural opposed to a Spiritual. At the same time there were not lacking monistic views of the subject. For example, the Platonic philosophy had represented the acquiring of knowledge as a Reminiscence, having reference to an unconscious and mysterious origin, and had pointed to this as the ground from which knowledge springs. So also, in very recent times, a comprehensive work ("*Psyche—A Contribution to the History of the Development of the Soul*") has been devoted to the demonstration of the proposition, that the key to the knowledge of the essence of the conscious life of

* Philosophie des Unbewussten: Versuch einer Weltanschauung, von E. v. Hartmann. Berlin, 1868.

the soul lies in the region of the Unconscious. This work can properly lay claim to have furnished a new basis for this special philosophic province, and to have elevated into prominence a new principle for philosophy in general. The non-exact sciences, as a rule, have all occupied themselves in manifold ways with the Unconscious,—indeed with striking, and frequently with *hostile*, irrelevancy. The astonishment which Von Hartmann's work has caused them is all the greater, inasmuch as the process by which he brings the apparently Heterogeneous into unconstrained harmony is so simple. He draws the Unconscious out of its hitherto isolated consideration—pulls it with one genial grasp (or, so to speak, with one stroke) at once into systematic order, and lights up the path upon which the edifice of a new philosophy of the Present (for which the inductive science of nature has prepared the material) is possible. A similar astonishment had been caused in the first half of the century in a much more tangible region—that, namely, of productive industry. Was not steam as it was set free—sometimes by cosmical changes of temperature on the surface, sometimes by volcanic activity in the interior of the earth, sometimes simply by boilers in different forms—although it was known, and, so to speak, intelligible to every body, uncomprehended for long centuries? Suddenly, with the knowledge and the appliance of its elastic force, it comes forward as a mighty power into the region of human activity, to raise it to a new and higher plane. In this case, as in the other, the old—that which has been from the beginning and has been known by man—has become something new. But this has happened not without a large number of previous attempts, many of them very discouraging.

Let us now attempt to give the readers of this journal an idea of the rich contents of the book itself.

After an introduction, in which the author opens with general remarks in regard to his problem, method and predecessors, and answers the question how we come to the assumption of design in nature, the subject is discussed according to its internal self-divisions and genetic order, in three sections, as follows:

- (1) The Unconscious in the physical organism.
- (2) The Unconscious in the mind.
- (3) The Metaphysics of the Unconscious.

The proposition of the Kantian Anthropology, that we have ideas without being conscious of them, forms the starting-point of the introduction. For the reason that it is otherwise impossible to explain certain phenomena in the region of spirit, it is necessary to go back to the existence of unconscious ideas as their cause.

"To combine all these phenomena, and in each separate case to make probable the existence of unconscious ideas and unconscious will, and by their sum to raise the principle in which they all agree to a height bordering upon certainty, is the task of the first two divisions of this work."

Thus the antitheses and contradictions of former systems are resolved in the principle of the Unconscious, which here becomes a united whole [*All-Einheit*] and embraces the universe.

"At last it reveals itself suddenly as that which has formed the kernel of all great philosophies—Spinoza's substance, Fichte's absolute Ego, Schelling's absolute subject-object, Plato's and Hegel's absolute Idea, Schopenhauer's Will, &c."

With a view to a critical examination of the methods of scientific cognition, the author was obliged to decide in favor of Induction for his investigations. Setting aside altogether the dialectic method, he justifies the exclusion of it by reference to a particular work published by him ("On the Dialectic Method," Berlin, 1868). According to our view, also, induction is in all cases a necessity where there is any question about the ascertainment and establishment of definite results, and their final unification into one general product. Whether it will suffice when it comes to be a question of working out in the form of an encyclopædia, such a final result, as a new principle in all directions, will be seen in the near future. After this, the author brings forward his views on the relation and difference of the inductive and deductive methods, by the side of which we know of nothing that has equal worth, as far as clearness and depth are concerned. Free from all one-sidedness, he gives full recognition to both methods, and as he demands that they shall mutually supplement each other, he considers every speculation false which contradicts the clear results of empirical investigation; and, on the other hand, he designates every view and interpretation of empirical facts as

false which contradicts the strict results of a purely logical speculation.

Of his predecessors Von Hartmann gives prominence, in the region of modern philosophy, in the first place, to Leibnitz. To that philosopher he attributes the discovery of unconscious ideas, and he gladly confesses that by the study of his works he was first incited to his own investigations. Kant appears to him to have got a little way beyond the standpoint of Leibnitz. On the other hand, he finds in Schelling the idea of the Unconscious in full purity, clearness, and depth. It appears less distinctly in Hegel. Schopenhauer's "Will" falls partly in the sphere of the Unconscious. From the more recent natural science, in which the idea of the Unconscious has hitherto found little admission, he brings forward as praiseworthy exceptions, C. G. Carus's *Psyche and Physis*, with special recognition. Finally, the philosophy of Herbart passes under review with special reference to the ideas under the threshold of consciousness, which, however, do not stand on the ground of the truly Unconscious. At the end of his introduction the author declares the hypothetical solution given by him of the question how we come to the admission of design in nature, not only to be new, but to be the only possible one. When, however, he expresses his opinion that the chapters of the first two divisions of the work, collectively and individually, prove the existence of the Unconscious, and that their intelligibility and power of carrying conviction mutually support and strengthen each other, he can scarcely have meant by this to ward off the reproach that might be made, of Mosaic construction. For the manner and mode of the internal development of his investigations corresponds essentially with the inductive procedure, which his free movement cannot allow to be cramped by a strictly systematic handling of the subject. On the other hand, it is, in the highest degree, calculated permanently to captivate a public which for a considerable time has been devoting itself to investigations in natural science, and, specially favoring these, has shrunk with distrust from philosophic works. It must immediately awaken in every one who takes up the book the agreeable conviction that it reads pleasantly; that he (the reader) is equal to the task of understanding it; nay, more, that philosophy is not, after all, such

an abstract bugbear as people try to persuade each other ; it is, rather, attractive in the highest degree—a charming study. Alongside of the remarkable applause which the philosophy of the Unconscious has already won in public criticisms, the author may feel himself rewarded for the care spent upon a profound and elegant presentation of the subject, by the applause which has been enthusiastically accorded to him in domestic circles by thoughtful women, to whom a theory of the universe which morally refreshes the whole of society, and glorifies life, is a desire and necessity.

As to the chief subject of the book itself, its compass and wealth of matter admits only of limited notice. The first topic extends to the phenomena of the unconscious will, in the independent functions of the spinal marrow and ganglia, and, setting out from the assumption of a merely gradual and not essential difference between man and animals, shows that the same thing which we find in our consciousness as the cause of our actions, and call will, also lives in the consciousness of the animals as a causal moment of their action, and must be called also will ; that, moreover, for the presence of will there is absolutely no brain necessary ; that man therefore, as well as the brainless animal, has his ganglionic will. And that the will, whether it has gone through the cerebral consciousness and become volition, or not, remains in its essence unchanged. The *unconscious idea in the production of voluntary movement* leads to the consideration of the *unconscious idea in instinct*, which constitutes, both in form and matter, one of the brilliant passages of the book, and closes with these recapitulatory words :

“Instinct is not the result of conscious reflection, not the mere consequence of physical organization, not the result of a mechanism lying in the organization of a brain, not the result of a dead mechanism attached to the mind externally, and foreign to its inmost essence, but it is the peculiar self-production of the individual, springing from his inmost life and character.”

If the author is unable, in considering this instinctive action, to avoid the assumption of an (unconscious) clairvoyance, yet he has not by any means (as he has been reproached for doing) put one enigma in place of another ; but facts of empiri-

cism have been used solely in order to arrive at further mutual explanation and confirmation. The limit of the union between will and idea is carried far beyond the halfness of Schopenhauer's philosophy, so that every unconscious will that really exists must be united with unconscious ideas. Moreover also the reflex actions are not to be considered as produced by the unconscious thinking of the nerve centres, but they are the instinctive actions of the subordinate nerve centres, it being demonstrated that instincts and reflex actions in individuals of the same species of animals, caused by similar excitements and motives, show essentially similar reaction. The whole doctrine of the Unconscious may be considered a refutation of the so-called "coarse" or radical materialism—in so far as it proves the existence of an immaterial principle standing above the material controlling laws of the nerve-currents. In particular, however, the chapter on *The Unconscious in the Healing Power of Nature* contains an abundance of physiological proof so adapted to carry conviction in favor of the existence of an ideal moment in nature, that without it the striking phenomena of healing power would be altogether inexplicable. The dead causality of material events, the general physical and chemical laws come into effect according to those unconscious ideas which reveal themselves as the healing power of nature, and are designated by the author as *Individual Providence*. Hereupon, after a preliminary consideration of the indirect influence of the *conscious activity of the soul on organic functions*, he closes this first division with an exposition of the unconscious inorganic structures, alluding first to the design apparent in organic structures, and then showing how by gradual succession it unites itself with the previously considered modes in which the Unconscious expresses itself. Schopenhauer's words: "Thus, empirically even, every being stands before us as its own work," form the transition to the following division.

The content of it, namely: "The Unconscious in the mind," is by far more familiar to the present time than the region above traversed, which comprehends mainly the series of organic formations below man. That region has only, in very recent times, been so far elaborated by natural science as to emit quite new flashes of light which illuminate important

subjects in human physiology. The merits of our author lie mainly in the independent philosophical elaboration of the appearance of the Unconscious in the physical system. For in the doctrine of the Unconscious in the mind, he might have moved upon beaten paths, where there was rich material awaiting him, more or less arranged, and accessible. In the first chapter, *Instinct in the Human Mind*, he treats of those human instincts which are more closely connected with the physical system, and to which, therefore, the name of instinct is usually more particularly given. The hollow conceit which prevails regarding human dignity, often refuses to admit the word instinct in the expressions of the Unconscious which are farther removed from the physical system although in other respects they are entirely similar. It refuses to admit this word because there seems to adhere to it something animal.

After this he develops in the following chapters: *The Unconscious in Sexual Love, in Feeling, in Character and Morality, in the Æsthetic Judgment and the Productions of Art, in the Rise of Language, in Thinking, in the Rise of Sensuous Perception, in Mysticism, in History*; and, at the close, compares *the Unconscious and the Conscious as regards their value for human life*.

The task which was here before the author—that, namely, of laying bare the roots of spiritual life—was, notwithstanding that much valuable preliminary work had been done, by no means an easy one. The principal difficulty lay, not so much in the sifting out of what he could render available for his purposes from the great mass of spiritual-philosophical material, as in fructifying with new germs a field that from time immemorial had been exhausted by the same uniform wearisome rotation of crops. A philosophy of spirit suitable for a soil reclaimed from empiricism by careful fostering, contains within it from the first the revolutionary forces of the Kantian philosophy, and is directly calculated to lead the individual sciences into new paths. The way, however, in which those branches of science that have hitherto been included in the spheres of the subjective, the objective, and the absolute spirit, may be rejuvenated, has been pointed out by the author in more than one place; in this connection special

attention is given to the state, art, religion, and history ; while, at the same time, medical science and social communism are not sent empty away. In this we may find indications of an encyclopædic treatment, which must come sooner or later ; that is, if the new theory of the universe is going to face, with worthy weapons, the inevitable combat against the attacks of partly obsolete, partly unripe knowledge, and of blind faith. For the fact that philosophy henceforth can victoriously penetrate into all the spheres of life only in encyclopædic completeness and on a large scale, and not in the disconnected form of brilliant essays, is a point in regard to which all persons capable of forming a judgment are agreed. The author takes leave of this division with the confession :

“ Finally, we ought to keep continually before our own eyes and those of others, everything that we owe to the Unconscious as a counterpoise to the advantages possessed by conscious reason, in order that the spring of all the true and beautiful, already half exhausted, may not entirely run dry, and humanity arrive at a premature old age. The idea of pointing to this need was one of the powerful motives impelling me to work out in a written form the thoughts laid down in this work.”

In the third and last division, the *Metaphysics of the Unconscious*, as is observed in the introduction : “ The principle of the Unconscious extends itself unobserved beyond the physiological and physical spheres to questions, and solutions of questions, which in common language would be spoken of as belonging to the region of metaphysics ; and these results spin themselves out so simply and naturally from considerations of natural science and physiology, that one would not at all observe the transition to another sphere, if the subject of these questions were not otherwise known to him.”

Nevertheless, the different determinations of concepts belonging to the *conscious and unconscious action of Mind* are taken up, their difference shown, and proof adduced to demonstrate that every unconscious idea is connected with unconscious will, and that both, therefore, existing in direct unity, form a common ground ; while, at the same time, a view is opened up to us at the close, how consciousness, which means the emancipation of the idea from the will (that is, from affection and interest) attains its gradual extension, until it is subjected to the sway of the conscious reason. At

the same time, throughout the whole series of investigations extending from the beginning to the end of this division, proof is continually adduced to show that the conscious reason which displays such admirable administrative power, never shows itself creatively productive, and would, if allowed full sway, degenerate into the merest dry system of circles of universal and particular, inclosing each other and inclosed by each other, if man did not continually bathe afresh in the real spring of his life, the Unconscious, and draw from it rejuvenated powers for new activity. Here, therefore, we are introduced to a series of most pregnant considerations, which develop themselves gradually, and progressively. Among other things, the author takes into closer view *the Brain and Ganglia as the Condition of Animal Consciousness*, and gives a physiology of the brain and its functions; the *Origin of Consciousness* affords him an opportunity of examining the difference between consciousness and self-consciousness; *the Unconscious and Conscious in the Vegetable World* leads him to disclose the relation existing between plants and animals, and, inasmuch as the plant, as well as the animal, is credited with a consciousness, to assume that the vegetable and animal kingdoms are on the whole less subordinate than we are in the habit of thinking them. In the chapter, *Matter as Will and Idea*, he devotes himself to considerations on the origin of matter, and tries his hand at the mystery of the atomic theory. He then crosses the bridge of *the Idea of Individuality*, and, after having established the relation between individual and genus, demands a separation between spiritual and material individuals, and that a distinction be made between consciously spiritual and unconsciously spiritual individuals, thus coming nearer to the *All-Unity of the Unconscious*. The Unconscious preserves its Monism by being the universal condition of the manifoldness of phenomena, without this Monism's interfering with the right of individual feeling of self. The question that connects itself with this, as to whence the manifoldness of phenomenal individuals comes, whence the individuality of each, why it exists, and how it is possible, touches the essence of *Individuation*, which is afterwards discussed, and much light is thus thrown especially upon Schopenhauer's doctrine.

From the stand-point of the All-Unity of the Unconscious, the author takes up the *Nature of Production*, and in this respect, likewise, occupies the ground of the latest natural science, which in this very direction has been enriched with so many new discoveries, and has been almost proved to a demonstration. In his treatment of the *Ascending Development of Organic Life on the Earth*, he occupies the scene of the clearing made by Darwin in the darkness of the primeval world, and shows himself very much at home in it, although by subjecting the Darwinian doctrine to the test of the principle of the Unconscious, he does not hesitate to show its deficiencies. The closing considerations on the *All-Wisdom of the Unconscious*, and on *The World as the Best Possible*, as well as on the *Unreason of Volition and the Misery of Existence*, cover what we are accustomed to understand by the terms Optimism and Pessimism. Behind the former we find the unconscious, behind the latter, the conscious will, a difference which can be reconciled only by the aims of the Unconscious becoming the aims of consciousness. This is the goal of the philosophy of the Unconscious. With this work in his hand, it well becomes the author to announce, as he has elsewhere done, that he is far from wishing to make mankind weary of the world, but that he believes he is setting forth more powerful motives than ever any one has done before him, to make them glad in the world.

What we have said in regard to Von Hartmann's work is intended less as a criticism than as a concise exposition, to gain readers for the work in circles where it may not yet be known. The majority of those who give it more than a passing glance, will feel themselves constrained to submit it to a more serious study. Thorough-going criticisms will then be forthcoming in abundance. Like all books that mark an era, it will, no doubt, call into existence a number of defenses and attacks, and will have to brave the purgatory of criticism. The author may fairly desire the application of such a clearing-process to his views, as he will hardly for any length of time be able to set aside the demand that will be made upon him to aid in drawing the consequences of his own scientific act. We speak of the development of these *Prolegomena* to a new comprehension of things, into the "imposing rotundity" of a system. It may be further remarked, that to the

author, his task and its position, considered with reference to the great philosophies of recent times, are perfectly transparent. The consciousness of the genetic justification of his stand-point lends him everywhere coolness and certainty of judgment in general, but more particularly in his polemics, where these, as belonging to the subject, cannot be avoided: the same consciousness adorns his style with that dignity and gentlemanly deference whose absence is so much to be regretted in the author of "The World as Will and Idea," as well as in others. Von Hartmann, in his criticism of the dialectic method, closes the preface to his Monograph on that subject with the noble words: "that we know no other duty to the heroes of science than that of examining their productions with more care than those of other persons, and in these words we have the ground tone of his whole polemical career—and no less in the Philosophy of the Unconscious."

Thus the public possesses in this book a thoughtful and vigorous account of the development of the Unconscious from its first presentiment up to the gorgeous edifice of human society under the sway of conscious reason, which continually seeks for self-invigoration and new birth in the Unconscious.

THE FREEDOM OF THE WILL.*

"Although Philosophy can bake no bread, yet she can procure for us God, Freedom, and Immortality." This often quoted saying of Novalis sounds strangely from the mouth of one living in the age immediately succeeding Kant's "Critique of Pure Reason," and reminds one of the "*Naturam expellas, etc.*" Those three great ideas will never let man rest until he has found a tenable theory of them for himself. No philosophy, whether positive or negative, skeptical or dogmatic, can set the matter at rest so that speculation shall cease. For the essential part of it is that each individual be clear in himself on these points; he is therefore obliged to think out the solution for himself before it becomes *his* solution.

Of these three gifts of philosophy, the second is of first interest to the Anglo-Saxon intellect. To speculate on the Freedom of the Will is the most natural philosophic activity for

* "*Two Letters on Causation and Freedom in Willing*, addressed to John Stuart Mill, with an Appendix on the Existence of Matter and our Notions of Infinite Space." By Rowland G. Hazard. Boston: Lee & Shepard. 1869.

"*Freedom of Mind in Willing, or Everything that Wills a Creative First Cause.*" By same author. New York: D. Appleton & Co. 1864.